



BIDEFORD RURAL DISTRICT.



ANNUAL REPORT

OF

The Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE

Year ending 31st December, 1938

To the Bideford Rural District Council

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

For the year ending 31st December, 1938.

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit to you my Twenty-Eighth Annual Report dealing with the Public Health and General Conditions of the District during the year 1938.

I have the honour to be Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

LEONARD B. BETTS,

M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Lond.)

Medical Officer of Health.

Cleverdon House,
Bradworthy.

ANNUAL REPORT, 1938

GENERAL STATISTICS

Area	...	...	...	...	...	...	53,570 acres
Population (Census 1931)	...	...	...	...	...	...	5,536
Registrar-General's Estimate of Residential Population, 1938	...	...	...	...	...	...	5,051
Number of Inhabited Houses	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,420
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	...	...	£16,577
Sum represented by a Penny Rate	...	...	...	...	...	...	£72

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The Rural District consists of Fourteen Parishes. Farming is the principal occupation. The custom of accommodating summer visitors at many of the farms and houses in the district is increasing both in the villages near the coast and inland. The district has a beautiful coast line of some Twenty Miles which it is the endeavour of the Council to preserve and with this object in view are working in conjunction with the North Devon Regional Planning Committee.

VITAL STATISTICS

Live Births —	M.	F.	Total.
Legitimate	28	27	55
Illegitimate	3	0	3
	—	—	—
	31	27	58

Birth-rate per 1,000 of the Estimated Population, 11.5

Birth-rate for whole of England and Wales, 15.1

Stillbirths :—	M.	F.	Total
Legitimate	1	0	1
Illegitimate	0	0	0

Deaths —	M.	F.	Total
From all causes	21	25	46

Death-rate per 1,000 of Estimated Population, 9.1 ; that for England and Wales being 11.6.

Deaths of Women from Puerperal Causes Nil
Deaths of Infants under one year of age :—

	M.	F.	Total
Legitimate	1	Nil	1
	—	—	—
	1	Nil	1

Infant Death-rate per 1,000 Live Births	17.2
Legitimate Death-rate per 1,000 Live Births	17.2
Illegitimate Death-rate per 1,000 Live Births	Nil
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	7
Deaths from Measles (all ages)	Nil
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages)	Nil
Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	Nil

The greatest number of Deaths from any one cause during the year was 15 from Heart Disease : 8 Males and 7 Females.

Deaths from Diabetes	2
Deaths from Phthisis	1
Deaths from other forms of Tuberculosis	1
Deaths from Appendicitis	Nil
Deaths from Diphtheria	Nil
Deaths from Poliomyelitis	Nil

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA

Medical

There is a part-time Medical Officer of Health, there are three District Medical Officers who are also Public Vaccinators.

There is a whole-time Sanitary Inspector.

Nursing

There are six District Nurses, all qualified Midwives.

Laboratory Facilities

There are no laboratory facilities in the District. Nearly all examinations are made by the County Bacteriologist at Exeter.

Hospitals

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital, which is supported partly by Voluntary Contributions and partly by Patients' Fees. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical Cases and contains about 40 beds.

The Isolation Hospital situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon and was completed in 1935. It contains about 30 beds.

The North Devon Infirmary (100 beds) is always available to take Medical or Surgical Cases from the district. There is a Maternity Ward in this Hospital.

Small Pox

Any case of Small Pox that may arise in this area will be treated in the Small Pox Hospital of the Devon County Council.

Ambulances

There is in Bideford an up-to-date Motor Ambulance for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases, and an Ambulance in connection with and kept at the Isolation Hospital.

Clinics and Treatment Centres

There is a treatment Centre for Venereal Disease, and a Tuberculosis Dispensary, both at Barnstaple. Tubercular patients are admitted at Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanitoria.

There is also a Child Welfare Centre and a Birth Control Clinic (both in Barnstaple).

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOODS.

Milk

There are 35 Registered Wholesale Sellers of Milk who are frequently inspected. Samples of Milk are regularly sent to Exeter for examination for Cleanliness and for Tubercle. There is a whole-time Veterinary Officer for the County.

Meat

The Sanitary Inspector examines all carcases.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Water

The Water Supply of nearly the whole district is derived from shallow wells. This water is mostly soft and plumb solvent, it soon rusts galvanized pipes. Asbestos pipes are now being recommended.

Thirteen samples of well water were chemically examined ; five of these were unfit for drinking on account of lead in solution or other causes, these defects were remedied, the remaining seven were fit for drinking.

ABBOTSHAM. Part of Abbotsham is supplied from Melbury Reservoir.

BUCKLAND BEWER. An additional water supply has been carried out in this village. It consists of a 7,000 gallon reservoir, supplied from a 40 foot well piped into the village with 7 standpipes. This supply is adequate.

HARTLAND VILLAGE. Active steps are being taken to provide a piped water supply for Hartland. Various sources of supply have been considered and the amount of water-flow in dry months gauged. A firm of Consulting Water Engineers, Messrs. Lemon and Blizard, of Plymouth, are being employed by the Council.

HARTLAND SEWERAGE SCHEME has been carried out in Gatta Meadow. The septic tanks and filter bed require frequent supervision by an intelligent man to prevent them becoming foul and this is receiving the attention of the Council.

WOOLSERY VILLAGE. The new Sewage Scheme is working very satisfactorily.

WOOLSERY WATER. The village is supplied by shallow wells. Lady Well has been cleaned out, the lead pipe replaced by galvanized iron which has become rusty. This water has been bacteriologically examined and it is proposed to protect the well further and to change the iron pipe to asbestos.

RAINFALL FOR 1938

The total rainfall for 1938 was 60 inches as recorded at Melbury Water Works, at Parkham.

THE HOUSING (RURAL WORKERS) ACTS, 1926—1931

From the figures given below it will be seen that some use has been made of the assistance offered by the County Council for the improvement of "Rural Workers" cottages.

However, the present total of 63 approved applications during the 13 years in which these Acts have been in operation is comparatively low when compared with the excellent figures attained in nearby districts, especially when it is known that the condition of many agricultural homes in this District could be improved economically under this scheme.

In the hope that more progress will be encouraged in the future, a brief summary of the most important provisions of the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts is given hereunder :—

- (1) This Act offers help to owners to reconstruct or improve dwellings or buildings so that they may be tenanted by agricultural workers (or persons in substantially the same position as agricultural workers).
- (2) Assistance is available for structural alteration, repair or addition to dwellings, new roofs, and for providing water supply, drainage, sanitary conveniences or other like works. Grants may also be obtained for the conversion of barns, and similar outbuildings into dwellings.
- (3) No assistance is available if the value of the dwelling after the completion of the proposed works is more than £400 ; or if the estimated cost of the works is less than £50 per dwelling.
- (4) Grants are given by the County Council which amount to two thirds of the estimated cost of the works (the grant for each dwelling not to exceed £100).
- (5) The rent charged upon completion of the work must not exceed the ordinary agricultural rent for the district concerned, plus 4% on that part of the cost of the works not covered grant.

These Acts are scheduled to terminate on September 30th, 1942.

District from which approved applications have been received—
RURAL. Barnstaple 284, Tiverton, including Bampton and Culmstock 206, Torrington 175, Okehampton 166, South Molton 101, Crediton 98, St. Thomas 92, Honiton 91, Newton Abbot 108, Holsworthy 75, BIDEFORD 63, Axminster 70, Tavistock 49, Totnes 56, Kingsbridge 32, Plympton 22, Broadwoodwiger 11.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA

Owing to the death of Mr. Dack, the Sanitary Inspector, who died the end of November, 1938, I am unable to enclose his report.

I have asked his successor, Mr. F. M. W. King, to give a report which is as follows :—

As successor to the late Mr. H. D. Dack, I have been asked to write this short summary bearing on the Sanitary Inspector's and Building Surveyor's work in this Rural District. Unfortunately the fact that my duties commenced as recently as the 1st April, 1939, prohibits me from presenting any details relating to work done throughout

the year ending 31st December, 1938. Further, I understand that my predecessor was indisposed through the major part of the year prior to his much lamented death in November last, and as a consequence, no accurate records of his work for the period under review are available.

Since taking up my appointment, I have endeavoured to make the importance of the Public Health Department recognised, and to bring the administration of same in line with modern methods, demands and legislation. Already I feel justified in stating that great progress has been made. From the outset it was stressed that no Officer could be expected to cope with the multifarious duties of a District of this size without having a respectable Office and equipment. As a result of my efforts, temporary accommodation has been provided, and I am endeavouring to get the necessary equipment by degrees and as economically as possible without sacrificing efficiency. Further, the advantages of having the various Departments of the Council close at hand, preferably in one "block," have been realised, and a Committee has been formed to negotiate for the acquisition of suitable premises for conversion into Council Offices.

Having dealt briefly with the "pivot" on which the efficiency of this Department must be moulded, I would like to detail briefly the matters which appear to be in most urgent need of attention:—

- (1) MEAT INSPECTION.—I am convinced of the importance of careful and systematic inspection of carcases slaughtered in this District, and shall do all in my power to form a plan by which regular visits can be paid to all places of slaughter. Already, I am pleased to be able to report that I have won the necessary co-operation of the Butchers.
- (2) MILK AND DAIRIES ORDERS, 1926.—It is indeed distressing to have to state that when appointed I found that in a District which is renowned for Agriculture and Dairy work, there were only 35 Registered Producers of Milk. There is little need to mention the amount of work which confronts us in this respect.
- (3) WATER SUPPLIES.—The question of Hartland's water supply has for years been a "thorny," though very important, problem, and in conjunction with the Consulting Engineers it is hoped to expedite the approval and execution of a satisfactory supply. Unfortunately, there are several other parishes which appear to be suffering from inadequate and not too wholesome water supplies. In time it is sincerely hoped that these conditions will be remedied.
- (4) SEWERAGE.—The remarks which have been given under the last heading apply almost without alteration to Sewerage. A report on each parish individually would occupy more space than I am allowed at this venture.
- (5) HOUSING.—It is hoped that the facilities offered by Housing (Rural Workers) Acts and the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1938, will be taken advantage of in the betterment of housing conditions—particularly for agricultural workers, of which there are so many in this District.

As regards Building Surveyor's work, already a new and comprehensive set of Building Byelaws, as set out in the Ministry of Health admirable Model, have been adopted by the Council and the formal procedure for their approval is now in progress. With these new Byelaws as the basis on which to work, I hope to exercise efficient control on all the building work in this District.

I feel that I have already exceeded the kindness given me by the Medical Officer in allowing these remarks to be included in this report, but it is hoped that enough has been said at least to show what an enormous amount of work is ahead of this Department, and how essential it is that the necessary encouragement be given to enable these duties, which are already long overdue, to be carried out efficiently and satisfactorily. I, at least, shall do all in my power to achieve this end.

May I once again express my grateful thanks to the Council for the honour which has been conferred on me in receiving this important appointment.

F. M. W. KING, A.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.
Sanitary Inspector and Building Surveyor.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Disease	Cases.	Sent to Hospital	Deaths.
Scarlet Fever ...	6	5	Nil
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Pneumonia ...	1	Nil	1
Erysipelas ...	2	Nil	Nil
Meningitis ...	2	1	2
Polyomyelitis ...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Typhoid ...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Paratyphoid ...	Nil	Nil	Nil

TUBERCULOSIS

NEW CASES AND MORTALITY DURING 1938

There were four new cases of tubercule notified during the year 1938, three Pulmonary aged 30 and 40 (females) and one male aged 18, and one child aged 4 non-pulmonary.

There were two deaths, one from Pulmonary Tuberculosis, aged 18, and one from non-pulmonary, aged 73.

There were 18 cases of Tuberculosis on the register at the end of the year.

	Males	Females	Total
Pulmonary ...	7	6	13
Non-Pulmonary ...	2	3	5
	<hr/> 9	<hr/> 9	<hr/> 18

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOP ACT, 1931

There are no factories or workshops in the Rural District.